THE GUIDON
National Newsletter of VVAW
Number 118 Spring 1992

Couples Tour of Vietnam

By Anne Luginbill and Joel Greenberg

On the morning of Saturday, Nov. 30, 1991, three couples—John Lindquist and Anne Bailey, John and Edith Zutz as well as Anne Luginbill and Joel Greenberg—departed from Mitchell Airport in Milwaukee for the start of a two week trip to Vietnam. For Lindquist and Greenberg it was to be the first time back since the war. John Zutz had been back for the first time 3 years earlier. For Annie, Annie and Edie this was the first trip to this part of the world.

We were the sixth delegation to return to Vietnam—the third since the war ended, and the first couples tour sent by VVAW Vietnam.

Our delegation had two main goals, first, to work towards normalization of relations between Vietnam and the US, secondly, we wished to meet with vets organizations there. Our trip was sponsored by the Vietnamese Friendship Association.

Giap, or tour guide and interpreter, was instrumental in helping us achieve the goals of the delegation as well as fulfilling many of our personal goals.

After obtaining visas in Bangkok, we flew into Hanoi. Our first three days were spent there. During that time we met with the Assistant Director of American Affairs at the Foreign Ministry. We presented him with a petition containing over 600 signatures from US citizens calling the US government to normalize relations and lift the embargo.

We also met with the Vietnamese Veterans Association. This group was formed in 1989. Within two years it has organized over two million veterans. Most of the people we met were retired Colonels and Generals of the North Vietnamese Army. They have been organizing chapters in every provence of the country, every major city and almost every town, with the assistance of the government. They do not recognize or welcome veterans who fought with the ARVNS.

The main topics discussed were our organizational structure and goals as vets groups. One of their concerns was the 480,000 Vietnamese still listed as missing from the war with the US.

Later in our trip, we met their chapter in Ho Chi Minh City. The main concern they had was setting up tours for former US Servicemen to the areas they had fought in. A four color brochure they produce lists ten or twelve tours to different areas of what was South Vietnam, based on the major units that fought there.

These were formal meetings. A fixed protocol was followed in every one of 16 meetings we participated in. At the same time, the Vietnamese were very gracious and cordial hosts.

We also went to Bac Mai Hospital in Hanoi and Tu Do Hospital in Ho Chi Minh City. Books could be written about the conditions of each hospital, as well as health care in general. Suffice it to say that the efforts of the US embargo have placed two of the major hospitals in the country in deplorably inhumane condition.

Bac Mai was destroyed by the US Christmas Bombing in 1972. It was rebuilt by 1984. In 1989, they first had sufficient electricity to install lights in the halls. Indoor plumbing, including running water is virtually non-existent.

Tu Do Hospital, which specializes as the women's and children's hospital, delivers a average of 100 babies a day. We saw 'trees' of disposable surgical gloves drying in the hallways. They had been washed out and made ready to re-use. They had not been sterilized. Washing them was the best they could do.

The lifting of the embargo will go a long way in aiding Vietnamese health care to enter the 20th century. Forget hi-tech equipment, they need basic supplies like aspirin, pain killers, gauze, band aids, swabs (Q-tips) and surgical gloves.

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Couples Tour

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One of the more interesting adventures was the drive from Hanoi to DaNang. Much of Hwy. 1, the major north-south road is unpaved. Most bridges were being rebuilt. Consequently, they were often one lane. Our Toyota van was one of the few individual cars to share the road with colorful but overloaded buses (people were literally hanging out the sides), motorbikes (50 to 85cc size, with up to four people on a bike), bicycles, trucks, herds of cows and water buffalo pulling carts.

At one point traffic had to go around someone who was taking a nap in the middle of the road. It was no surprise that we made less than 300 miles in 12 hours, even though we made only three stops.

Numerous articles and stories can be written about all the different activities on the trip: from the side trips en route to Da Nang to the tunnels of Cu Chi; shopping in Hanoi, Danang and Ho Chi Minh City; the people we met along the way; roadside restaurants to the bar on top of the Rex Hotel (formerly used as US officers quarters); from small, struggling production factories to successful international companies; from a policy of joint ventures to the striving for self development. We were exposed to a wide variety of Vietnamese life. It was a very full and busy ten days.

One of the lasting impressions I will have of the trip are the Vietnamese people themselves. I was prepared for the attitude that the war was twenty years ago (the Vietnamese have had two other wars since then). I was not prepared for the generosity, the warmth and welcome we received from one end of the country to the other.

The easing of travel restrictions, which has happened since our return, the normalizing of relations and the ending of the embargo will go a long way in helping Vietnam end a lot of unnecessary suffering and inhumane conditions.

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FROM THE EDITOR

A second newsletter and its still winter? The authors of this issue's articles wasted no time in submitting copy. The Vietnam delegation members hardly got over their jet lag before they cranked out these great articles. We have several repeat contributors. Do we have some potential columnists? We will try and spell Dave Kettenhofen's name correctly this time. Especially since he is one of my VVAW overlords. Notice the pictures in this issue? Very expensive.

We want ads, articles, pictures, clippings and controversial letters to the editor. How about some interviews? Interview yourself, get an official newsletter hack ID card. I am grateful for those contributors who sent articles in on computer disk and typed copy. The time they save makes it easier when I have to translate the Sanskrit from a certain Milwaukee, ex-national coordinator.

Unfortunately, I didn't make the specifications for these electronic articles clear. The files must be on an IBM formatted disk. My machine refuses to digest disks formatted for an Apple or Mac. I use Word Perfect 5.1. Therefore I can translate files from many other types of word processing software. If in doubt, send me an ASCII file. Either 5.25 or 3.5 inch disks are ok. High or low density formats are ok. Just to make sure, please send me a printout along with the disk.

Don't get me wrong, Ill take writing on a paper napkin, audio tapes or almost anything readable and be glad to get it. So send the stuff in already. And don't forget the pictures which, by the way, cost us a lot to print.

The Guideon

The Guideon is the national newsletter of VVAW. It is a supplement to *The Veteran* and meant to inform and present issues and events that our member may find important. Members are encouraged to submit articles, events, poems, drawings and photos.

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Sixth VVAW Delegation Visits Vietnam

By John Lindquist

The sixth trip to Vietnam by VVAW was a complete success. We want to thank all those who donated money, rain gear, general support and all around good vibes.

As far as we know, this was the first trip by a national veterans' group to include both veterans and their wives. Besides reflecting the true nature of VVAW, it also shows those in doubt that it is safe to travel in Vietnam. The main political objective of the trip was to push for normalization of relations between our governments. We also wanted to meet veterans and do some touring. We did it all.

The delegation spent two days in a plane or airport, four days in Bangkok, and nine days in Vietnam. The six people who went also drove about 650 miles from Hanoi to Danang. Be sure to ask any of us about our riverboat cruise.

The first two days were spent in Bangkok getting visas, sight-seeing and shopping. No jet lag, we were too excited.

Landing in Hanoi

Wednesday, Dec. 4th, Thai Air flew us over Laos and we landed in Hanoi. As we landed, it was easy to see the bomb craters around the airport. Tran Trong Giap met us, guided us through customs and shepherded us into a Toyota van.

Giap, who worked for the Viet-Mi (Vietnam - American Friendship) Society would be our guide and interpreter for our entire time in Vietnam. We would also become much more familiar with the van, and it's driver, Tung who tried to keep us out of too much trouble.

While in Hanoi for three days, we had dinner with the Friendship Society; met with the newly formed Veterans Association; visited a factory staffed solely by veterans or their widows and orphans; toured Bach Mai Hospital; visited a craft factory; and did some shopping.

We also ate, and ate, and ate. We drank a bit as well. The food was generally delicious, and the beer was good.

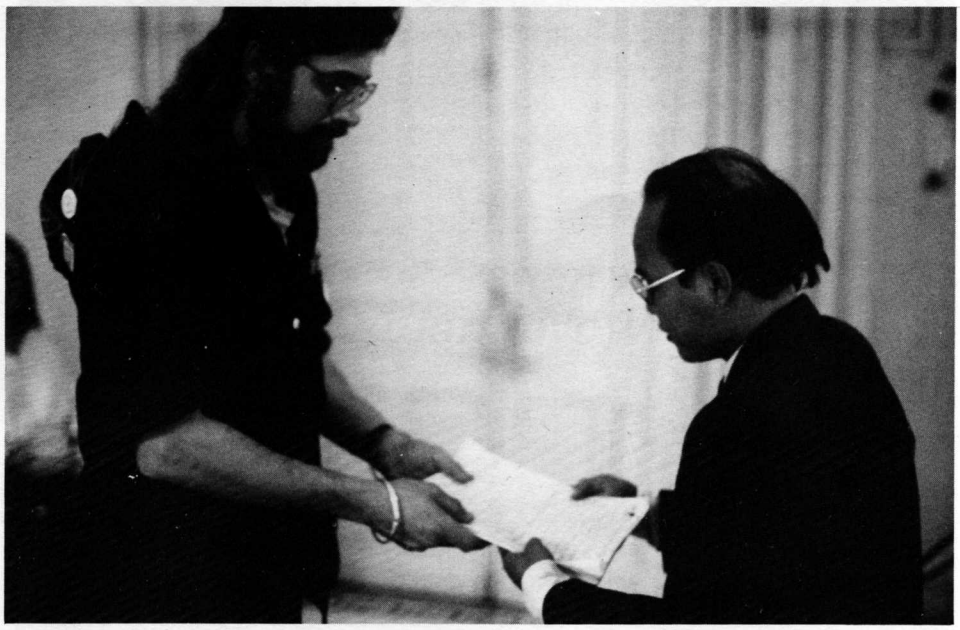
Veterans Association

Meeting with the old officers, who are now the leadership of the Veterans Association, was interesting. One ex-general, Huynh Dac Huong, we began calling "General Dad," because it seemed he was always trying to feed us. Only when we were ready to leave did he tell us that he had served in Laos in '67 --'72. He commanded the artillery sieges from Khe Sanh to Cau Vet, the DMZ!

He was in charge when my bunker was hit! He said, "We knew you were a good man so we missed." I told him, "You didn't miss. I filled enough sand bags to know that."

We left Hanoi in our trusty Toyota van and drove south for a four day drive (a 12 hour push the first day). We eventually stopped in Danang. On the way we spent nights in hotels in Dong Hoi, Dong Ha and Hue. The hotels weren't exactly up to

John Lindquist presents petitions to Le Bang of the Foreign Ministry, Chief Negotiator of Foreign Office for Normalizing Relations with U.S.



international standards, but they did have running water and private bath rooms. That was more than most of the restaurants could boast.

Visit at Dong Ha

We spent some extra time in Dong Ha, which was a sleepy little village with a large Marine base during the war. The whole base has disappeared under the good sized, bustling, new town. The cement landing ramp still exists on the river.

We traveled out the old convoy route west on Hwy. 9, beyond FSB (Fire Support Base) Vandergrif. There were no signs the Marines had ever been in the area. The jungle that we fought through 20 years ago is almost all gone. It has almost all been replaced by scrub and pampas grass.

From Dong Ha, we traveled by what was no more than an overgrown canoe to the mouth of the Cau Viet river. This was the base where I had my bunker blown away. I stood . . . and later pissed on the spot. Again the only sign of Marine presence was the cement landing ramp, as well as a number of Amerasian kids.

We managed to be detained by the army here. It seems it is a military outpost. Word from Dong Ha that we were coming never reached them. The young troops did their job and sent us to their officer. Some fast talking by Giap and a pot of tea, along with cigarettes for the troops, and we were on our way. However, no pictures were allowed.

After lunch with the People's Committee in Dong Ha, we turned south again, into the monsoon rain. Somehow, though we stayed the night in Hue, our permission to visit the Citadel didn't come through. So we had to be satisfied with views from the outside. We left early and med our way through the Hai Van pass ("Pass of the Clouds"), and into Danang.

We ate, of course, did some shopping and met vets (who fought for the South) on the street. We talked to them over beer.

Rather than stay in Danang, we opted to stay on the Beach. We found a new (2 year old) resort between the foot of Marble Mountain and the South China Sea. In fact it occupied the site of 3rd Amtrack Bn, USMC! What a blast from the past. We were able to get wet in the ocean and get some pieces of Marble Mountain to bring home.

After our night on the beach we needed to stop at the police station before leaving Danang. Seems the People's Committee somewhere up the line had sent word that we had been detained, and then skipped. Again Giap's fast talking kept us moving.

As we were waiting at the Danang airport for our flight to Ho Chi Minh City, we were interviewed by Swedish TV. Then we boarded a Russian made plane with bald tires that was configured for Vietnamese.

We made it safely into Saigon (as everyone who lives there still calls it) for our last two days. It was hotter, and much more active than the rest of the country. We met with the local chapter of the Veterans Association; visited Tu Du obstetric and pediatric hospital, which is internationally known for it's work on Agent Orange poisoning; and toured the Cu Chi tunnels. It is truly amazing to see how people will strive for independence.

"Capitalist Venture"

We concluded the trip by breaking the US government's embargo on foreign investment. Instead of tipping our guide Giap, which he insisted many times was not done, we invested in him. A contract was drawn up and signed by each of us. You might say our joint venture was financed by a bond. It was an exercise in capitalism at it's finest.

The trip home seemed much longer than the trip over, and the recuperation time was long. But we are here and functioning again.

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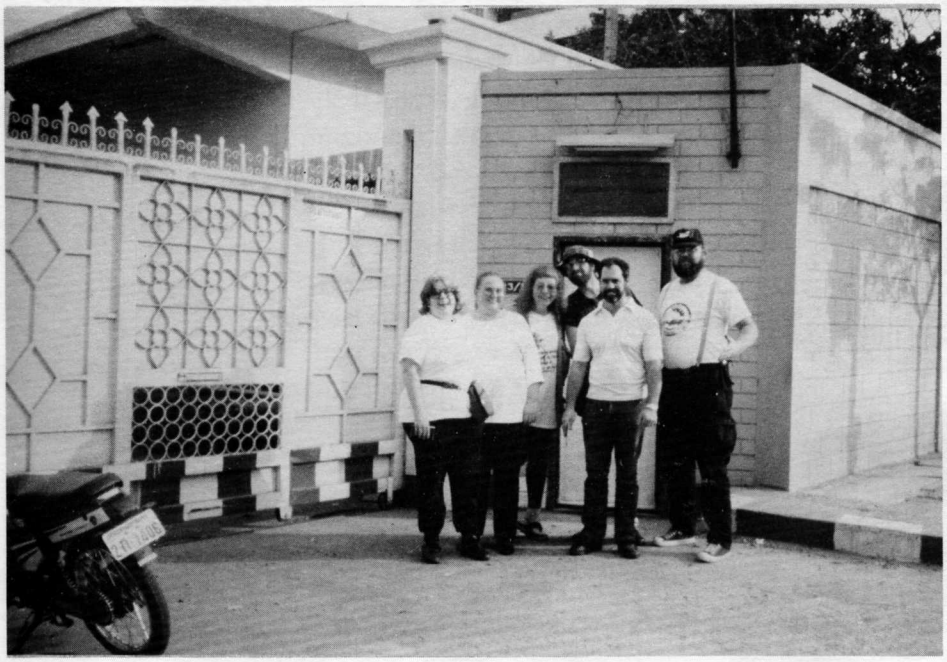
Members of the VVAW delegation obtaining Visas at Bangkok's Vietnam Embassy.



How to Travel to Vietnam

By John Zutz

John served in Vietnam '69-70', and has returned to Vietnam twice as a member of delegations sponsored by Vietnam Veterans Against the War, Inc. Dec. '91 was the first time a national veterans group went with their wives.

It has become easy to travel to Vietnam. Guide books and language courses are available. Flights and tours can now be booked from the US., and the Vietnamese have made it considerably easier to travel to, and within Vietnam.

Group tours may be booked in Bangkok, but individual tours are available for small groups, as are rental cars and English speaking guides, in Vietnam.

When traveling through the country, passes and documentation are necessary and should be pre-arranged to help save time (this is where a tour agency helps). Most hotels will hold your passports for identification, and to ensure that you pay your bill.

On the other hand the people are genuinely pleased to see travelers. The local grapevine works quickly and crowds as many as five deep will gather to watch you eat, or drink a beer. Children especially will make you feel like the Pied Piper, following along trying to touch clothing or skin. Some children will break out laughing spontaneously, and even adults will point and smile as you walk by. We started calling ourselves the Circus Parade and jokingly thought of charging admission.

After deciding to travel to Vietnam you will want to study a little about the people, their history, and their language. I found I learned more in two weeks of travel than I learned in the whole year I lived there.

As an introduction, and even if in the end you decide you can't afford the trip, I recommend *Vietnam, Opening doors to the World* by Rick Graetz, published in 1988 by American Geographic Publishing of Helena, Montana. It is a well-done color picture book, suitable for the coffee table, showing the beauty and variety of Vietnam. It answers the most asked question from Americans, "Why would you want to go there?"

A good basic cassette language course, which may have been developed by the US Foreign Service Institute, is available from Educational Services Corp., 1725 K. St. NW, Suite 408, Wash. DC 20006. The short course is about $30 and should get you through a couple of weeks in country.

This is not strictly necessary. Sign language can get you by. It helps to have a guide or interpreter to order food and hotel rooms. Many Vietnamese speak English, and are eager to practice on an American. No matter how deep into the bush you go, some kid will cruise by on his bike and yell, "Hello, how are you?" Still it's courteous to be able to say "Hello (Chow ong)" or "Thank you (Com onh)" etc., and even the attempt to speak with them will garner a few smiles from your hosts.

Two good guide books are available, *The Vietnam Guidebook* by Barbara Cohen (be sure to get the newest edition), is published by Harper and Row of New York. Lonely Planet also publishes an excellent guide book. They each give a brief study of the country from a historical perspective, a city by city rundown, and have some rudimentary language translations.

Other guide books, and maps, are available from street vendors in Vietnam. Though you may be able to buy them from the local post office a bit cheaper. A guide book of Hanoi, purchased on the street in '91, was printed in English the year before by the Foreign Languages Publishing House. It gave a concise listing of the tourist attractions, and was graced by a color photo of the pagoda and arching rainbow bridge built on the Lake of the Returned Sword.

Since the US still doesn't have diplomatic relations with Vietnam, be prepared to spend up to three days getting a visa in another country that has a Vietnamese embassy. Typical choices are Manila, Bangkok, or Paris. Our choice was Bangkok. So get some up-to-date guide books on whichever your choice may

Make 25th Anniversary Hotel Reservations Now

All reservations must be made before May 1st. The hotel will not hold our block of rooms after that date. To reserve, have credit card handy and call: 1-800-258-2505, The Vista Hotel, and ask to reserve one of the block of rooms for Vietnam Veterans Against the War, not 'VVAW'. The rates are: Single or double $99.11, Triple $110.54, Quads $127.21. You must cancel at least 24 hours in advance to avoid being charged for one day. The hotel is wheel-chair accessible. There is a pool, jim, restaurants and several bars. We are warned that some of the bars require a sport coat.

be, and spend a little time sight seeing there too.

I suggest writing head of time to the Vietnamese Embassy of your choice, telling them when you will be coming to apply for a visa. It helps to have a sponsoring organization, which could be a person, or a tourist agency (see below). In Bangkok the address is: Vietnam Embassy, 83/1 Wireless Road, Bangkok, 10500. Give them all of the information on your passport, as well as your employment, whom you will be traveling with, purpose of travel to Vietnam, dates of desired travel into and out of Vietnam, itinerary within the country, and include a photo. Each person you are traveling with should do the same, and include all the information in one envelope. This courtesy to the Embassy may speed up your visa, or it may not.

The Vietnamese Embassy in Bangkok had two excellent reference books for sale. *This is Vietnam*, a digest and directory for the business traveler published twice a year by Beca Investments Ltd., #3201 Bank of America Building, Harcourt Road, Central, Hong Kong, includes a few upbeat stories, information about what investments are needed, a few maps, travel tips such as, "city water supplies ar sterilized—he Finns have been helping run Hanoi's water supply system for years," and some simple vocabulary, "Tram phan tram (bottoms up—slightly impolite)." It also includes a business directory and business tips.

The Vietnam Executive Diary, published by the Foreign Affairs Ministry, gives information about how to invest, banking and immigration information, and practical information like, "Vietnam has a tropical monsoon climate, with two distinct seasons: rainy and dry," and that foreigners may only lease land.

One of the most interesting tourist agencies I ran into is named CCB tour, and is based in Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon). This agency is made up of the members of the Vietnam Association of War Veterans and in its brochure promises a "travel programme to former battlefields." It claims that it serves "visitors who were ex-combatants (and their friends)" from: 1st Infantry, 25th Infantry, 173rd Airborne, 196th Light Infantry, 11th Armored Cav., 9th Infantry, 101st Airborne, 100th Infantry, 1st Air Cav., 4th Infantry, 1st Marines, and 4th Marines. It also lists Australian, Korean and Thai, as well as the French Expeditionary Corps units.

CCB offers guides who were "Field Generals, Commanding officers, Heros of people's armed forces, Men and women guerrillas, Fighter pilots, Economic Experts." The agency "will offer you the opportunity to: Hold talks about the past war on military strategies, operations and tactics; make trips to any co-ordinates of the old battlefields you want, in remembrance of your life span in the war; Make reference to historical war documents; Get up to date economic information for marketing, investments and economic co-operation."

It goes on to offer: "accommodation at hotels in Ho Chi Minh City at your choice,"; "stay overnight at former battlefields 'with adequate services of soldier,'"; drive yourself a jeep or command car to chosen spots in a prearranged schedule,"; enjoy a "hobby such as fishing or hunting."

The back page of the brochure mentions the Gia Dinh Manufacturing and Business Corporation that includes industrial manufacturing, agricultural and sea products processing, trading services, and tourism. It says that CCB Tour "collects remembrances of the past and present, photographs, handicraft products... by Vietnamese traditional artists and craftsmen."

It says that, "CCB Tour serves you; to make friends with Vietnamese people and veterans; to find true sentiments of reconciliation; to span a bridge of mutual understanding for durable friendship and co-operation." They promise that your tour will be arranged within 15 days of your fax request. Their liaison office is at 29 Nguyen Thong Street, 3rd district. Phone:22728 , Fax: Saigon Fax 84-8- 98540.

I did not try CCB's tours, nor do I know their rates. I did, however meet a number of the ex-generals and colonels. They all seem eager to have tourists visit. Next time I go I suspect I'll give them a jingle.

The main tourist organization, a quasi-governmental corporation, is Vietnamtourism, 30 Ly Thuong Kiet Str., Hanoi. Phone: 425552, 426-4148 or 4256916. Telex: 411272 TCDL-VT. Fax: (84)457538. Anything that is available to be seen in the country can be arranged through them. ■

REMEMBERANCES FOR JOURNAL

New York wishes to make rememberances about VVAW a big part of the 25th anniversary commemorative journal. If you could remember something, try to keep it to about one page or 250 words.

T-SHIRTS

Commemorative T-shirts are also being planned. They will have VVAW's name, symbol or something on front and the words 'VVAW Victory Tour' on the back. The idea is for all you people to send the names of your favorite demos to the Brooklyn VVAW address. Then those happy gnomes will stencil them onto nifty T-shirts for our greater glory and financial gain.

Denying the Pentagon its cannon fodder

By Joe Miller

Last year about this time, as the government and a large part of the public were congratulating themselves over "winning" the war against Iraq, Champaign-Urbana's Progressive Resource/Action Cooperative (PRC) committed itself to a series of issue-oriented campaigns. One of these is the effort to counter the continued militarization of schools in this community.

A central aspect of this campaign involves visiting local high schools to provide alternative information about military service to those young people who have become prime targets for the military recruiters. With the recent budget increase for recruiting from $2.1 billion to $2.5 billion per year, it is clear that the Pentagon plans to take full advantage of its new "popularity" to entice young people into the military. At the same time, quotas for recruiters have been reduced somewhat. This means that with a greater budget, recruiters will now be going after more highly-qualified young people, those who should be university-bound. It seems that what used to be known as the "poverty draft," that is, use of miliary service as a way (perhaps the only way) to escape poverty conditions, may be on the way out.

National Campaign to Demilitarize Our Schools

In light of this, a National Campaign to Demilitarize Our Schools (NCDOS) was formulated during 1991, and the PRC became a sponsoring organization, along with the American Friends Service Committee, the Central Committee for Conscientious Objectors, the Midwest Committee for Military Counseling, and may others. Some of the major points of this national Campaign involve removing miliary recruiters from the high schools; ending the practice by many high schools of providing names, addresses and phone numbers to recruiters without first obtaining the students' permission; demanding an end to the administering of the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) in high schools. The ASVAB tests high school students for military jobs. It really has no application to the civilian job scene. The recruiters use these test scores to better identify potential recruiting targets.

Exchanging Views in the Classroom

This past December, I was given the opportunity, as a member of Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) and one of the coordinators of the PRC's anti-militarism campaign, to speak to four senior-level classes at Champaign Central High School. Each class was composed of twenty to forty students, and I was invited into the classes by the teachers who had learned of our campaign. I had previously spoken to classes at Centennial High School, and we had sponsored counter-recruitment speakers at Urbana High School, but this was the first time we had the chance to visit Central.

I loaded up a bag with all the literature I could carry and headed for the first class, scheduled to begin around 8:00AM. My first question to all four classes was "How many of you have been contacted by the military recruiters?" Without much deviation, nearly three-fourths of each class had already been contacted. Many of the students complained that the recruiters would not leave them alone; they received calls at home, sometimes two or three times a week. The students were usually surprised to learn just how many of their classmates were targets of the recruiters, and through discussion we learned that the high school was providing names, addresses, and phone numbers of all seniors to local recruiting offices. There was much anger at this, as these young people felt their privacy had been violated.

Recruiter Fraud

In each class we talked about the frequency of recruiter fraud. Students were reminded to look upon recruiters as used car salespeople. We talked about the applicability of military jobs to civilian life, that in 1989 it was learned that only 12% of men and 6% of women were able to make any use of their military training in civilian jobs. The issue of rights and freedom inside the military was also brought up. This is not a job that you can just quit anytime you wish; once you've signed the enlistment agreement, you belong to the armed forces twenty-four hours

a day, seven days a week during your active duty period. The rights you take for granted as civilians disappear when you put on the uniform.

These young people were also reminded that, although the TV ads and recruiting brochures don't usually highlight it, the real purpose of the military is to fight wars. As soldiers or sailors, their job is really to kill and/or die. Most young people tend to give little thought to the morality of war, or their own willingness to kill on command. This led us into a discussion of the military resisters to the war in the Persian Gulf.

Contrary to my fears, there was no visible animosity toward those who had joined the military and then discovered they could not, would not, kill other human beings. For many of these students, news about resisters inside the armed forces was surprising, especially in light of the "popularity" of this war. There seemed to be a certain admiration for the bravery of these men and women who refused to participate in the slaughter. Many students asked about (and took pamphlets concerning) Conscientious Objector status.

After four hours of talking to four different groups of students, I was drained. Drained, but heartened by the feeling that perhaps some of these young people will now have second thoughts about choosing military servitude; they will find other, more humane and socially useful ways to serve humanity. This was only the beginning of our local campaign. We shall be back in those schools regularly to deny the Pentagon our children and friends.

■

Membership Form
VVAW

Fighting for Veterans, Peace and Justice since 1967

National Office
P.O. Box 408594
Chicago, IL 60640

Date _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Dates of Service (if applicable) _____

Branch _____ Unit _____

Overseas Duty _____ Date _____

Military Occupation _____ Rank _____

VVAW welcomes all people who want to join to build a veterans' organization to fight for peace and justice. Although most of our members are vets of the Vietnam era, we want all veterans of all ages—as well as interested non-vets—to join to help prevent more Vietnams. The initiation fee is $5 to be sent to the National Office.

VVAW is a democratic organization. Chapters decide on local programs and projects under the general guidelines of the national program. Chapters elect local leadership and representatives to annual national meetings where major organizational decisions are made and national coordinators are elected. These coordinators are responsible for day-to-day organization, leadership and publishing of *The Veteran.*

Make checks payable to VVAW.
All contributions are tax-deductible.

Working for Homeless Veterans

By Dave Kettenhofen

As I sit in the relative comfort of my home the temperature outside is 10 degrees and dropping. I feel fortunate. For some 500,000 veterans the street will be their home this year; no furnaces, fireplaces, or warm beds.

The fact that 30-40% of the homeless men in the United States are veterans is an outrage. These men answered their government's call to arms and now they are MIA-missing in America. Where is the special Senate committee to try to determine what happened to them? We know without a doubt that they exist. When will their peace come?

Many of the homeless vets are suffering from mental illness, PTSD, and substance abuse directly related to their combat experiences. But the overwhelming cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. Back in 1989 there were 4.1 million more households in need of affordable rental units than there were units available. With the current economic recession things are getting worse. In a recent survey of 28 major U.S. cities there was a 26% rise in emergency food requests and a 13% increase in requests for emergency shelter.

The Veterans Administration has two special programs to assist the homeless veteran: the Homeless Chronically Ill Program and the Domiciliary Care for Homeless Veterans Program. These programs which began in 1987 have provided treatment for about 12,000 homeless veterans so far. The VA also has general benefits and services to assist homeless vets, Obviously these programs are not equipped to meet the demand for services.

Some veterans organizations are doing a lot of work in this area. They are fundraising and pounding the streets doing outreach. Some are opening transitional homes where homeless veterans receive counseling, job training, and other educational services until they are able to go it on their own. These organizations should be applauded for their work. However due to a serious lack of manpower and sufficient funds these programs can only put a dent in the overall problem.

Ultimately the solution is the responsibility of the government who sent these men to war. But what do the politicians have to gain by supporting homeless vets? These vets don't have lobbyists; they are not members of veterans groups—they are an underclass. Hell, they don't even vote. The politicians would rather be visible at welcome home parades, "support the troops" functions, and memorial dedications where the media is present—prime time. They look good shaking hands and patting vets on the back. Programs for the homeless might interfere with the almighty budget cuts everyone is clamoring for. The issue which has been dodged by politicians since the Revolutionary War wasn't even mentioned in the first Democratic debates this fall.

That leaves it up to us, VVAW and all the other veteran's organizations. If the politicians consider us just a bunch of social clubs we have to prove them wrong. We must put pressure on them to resolve the problem by instituting workable programs with adequate funding. The homeless vets are the brothers that fought alongside of us and those of us who have been more fortunate cannot let them down. The politicians can't be allowed to forget that taking care of veterans is part of the cost of waging war. Write or call your congressmen and make them accountable in the upcoming elections. ■

Interference at Spearing Sites Banned

Federal Judge Barbara Crabb permanently banned Dean Crist and anti-treaty rights groups from interfering with Lac du Flambeau Chippewa spearfishing on January 8th. Many VVAW members have endured racist insults and attacks while standing up with other progressive people in defence of tribal treaty rights on the boat docks of Wisconsin. We would like to believe that this long overdue ruling will end the yearly battles. However with Bush, etc. openly encouraging ignorant fools to blame someone, anyone other than the rich for the desperate conditions working people are enduring, more attempts at bullying anyone these beer sodden racists perceive as weak is possible. Further struggle is likely. Congratulations to the Lac du Flambeau Chippewa and their many supporters for winning this battle.

Militarization of the Drug War Equips Violent Repression in Colombia

The "narco-terrorism" remains unrelenting. One day after the *New York Times* ran an article by the head of the Committee in Defense of Human Rights in central Colombia, his secretary was assassinated.

At 8 p.m. January 29, Blanca Valero de Duran was executed in the doorway of the Committee's regional offices in downtown Barrancabermeja by two assailants. She was shot 12 times before her killers fled on a motorcycle. Valero had been heading home from the human rights offices where she had worked for 13 of her 38 years.

The incident is a small part of the worsening human rights emergency which has gripped the region in recent months. The area around Barrancabermeja is considered to be a stronghold of oil workers and the Patriotic Union, a progressive electoral coalition. Over 1700 of its members have been assassinated since its formation in 1985.

The military is bombing villages in the countryside. International human rights groups have noted that the Colombian government received aircraft matching the type used in the bombings in its U.S. assistance package under the auspices of narcotics control.

Colombian Army Chief-of-Staff General Luis Roca admits that $38.5 million of the $40.3 million allocated to Colombia for anti-narcotics assistance in FY 1990 was slated for logistical support for a three-year counter-insurgency program.

Activists have warned that U.S. militarization of the drug problem is complicating an already severe human rights situation. Colombia competes with Guatemala for the most violence in Latin America. Peasants and activists are often "disappeared". Their bodies, if found, show signs of relentless torture and dismemberment. Further, the policy could weaken the fragile democracies in the Andean region by boosting the resources and profile of the armed forces.

Curiously, U.S. aid may well be finding its way into the pockets of the very traffickers it is supposed to defeat. The Colombian National Police is responsible for 80-90% of all anti-narcotics raids, yet 77% of the U.S. aid package went to the military where corruption is extensive. In the words of one European diplomat, "I've been to places where the army frustrates [the] police, where they're actually guarding the labs . . . I've noticed no increased commitment on the part of the army to go after traffickers."

Drug traffickers have an alliance with the right-wing and the military through their joint paramilitary units. Termed "narcoparamilitarism" by one historian, the traffickers have linked with the large landowners to form paramilitary units—very often with the tangible support of the army. The death squads operate under names such as The Red Fascist Army, Kan Kill, and Exterminator. The use of hired assassins (sicarios) like those who gunned down Valero has also increased.

While there are 100 massacres and countless assassinations annually in Colombia, George Bush claims that there is no consistent pattern of gross human rights violation—a prudent evaluation since the U.S law forbids military aid to countries with severe human rights problems.

According to the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) the Andean strategy hasn't met its chief two-year goal of reducing cocaine supply to the United Stated by 15%. In fact, U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration agents report that production in South America *increased* in 1990 by 28%. DEA agents estimated that coca production would increase in 1991 by another 10%, reaching record levels. The U.S. has slated $282 million in military assistance for Colombia the 5-year period ending in 1994. The Andean region has become the main locus of U.S. military activity in the hemisphere and is slated to receive more U.S. military assistance over the three-year period between FY 1990 and FY 1992 than all of Central America.

Meanwhile, the military, paramilitary units and sicarios have followed the aircraft into the area around Barrancabermeja to discover real or imaginary guerrillas, to drive the peasants from their land and even from their refugee centers, to dislodge the Patriotic Union by death or disappearance from its legally elected positions, to break this oil union stronghold, and to silence people like Valero. Not coincidentally, these actions will help secure the section of the country where new oil has been discovered—reportedly the largest oil deposit in the western hemisphere.

For More Information: Colombia Human Rights Committee (312) 248-5755. Resources for this article include **Clear and Present Danger: The U.S. Military and the Drug Wars in the Andes** by Washington Office on Latin America; **Human Rights Working Paper** of the Alternative Legal Services Institute.

25 YEARS

FIGHTING FOR VETERANS, PEACE & JUSTICE

JOIN THE CELEBRATION!

- of the 1967 founding of VVAW—the first organization of veterans and GIs in this nation's history to oppose the war they'd fought in while it was still in progress;
- of the veterans peace and justice movement that has developed since that time;
- of the virtue of dissent and opposition in a democratic society.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

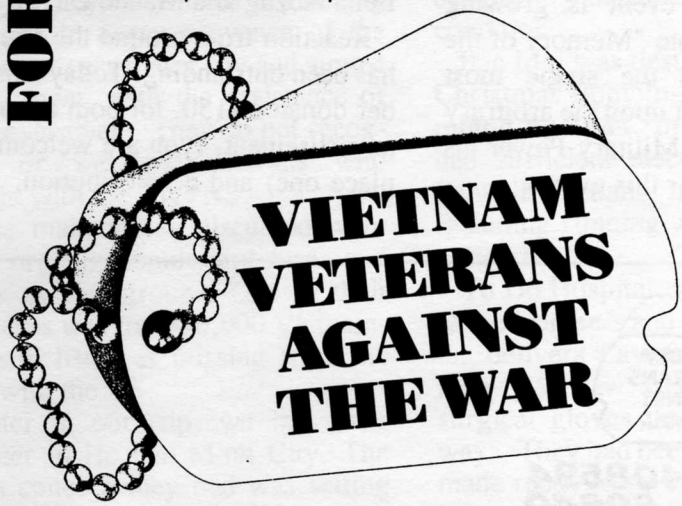
FRIDAY, MAY 29 • Informal gathering as participants arrive for the weekend

SATURDAY, MAY 30 • Morning memorial service and wreath-laying ceremony (not limited to Vietnam); Afternoon meal/celebration honoring those whose energies and deeds fed the passionate groundswell of the veterans antiwar movement (vets and civilians alike); Evening concert/unity rally among veterans and peace and social justice activists, featuring a concert by Country Joe McDonald

SUNDAY, MAY 31 • Morning reflection to discuss our lives and times and ways in which to extend our experience and efforts in the future

HOUSING: Arrangements have been made at vastly reduced rates in a major New York hotel (which is fully accessible and where rooms normally start at $215/night). Rates: $100 for singles and doubles, $111 for triples and $128 for quads. April 18th cutoff. Inquire for details and special needs.

JOURNAL: A commemorative journal is being prepared for this event. We welcome your historical—or hysterical—remembrances of VVAW for possible inclusion (250 typewritten words, max). We also welcome your support through advertising and messages of solidarity. Prices range from $10 for a Sponsor's Listing to $300 for a full Gold Page advertisement. Inquire for complete rates.



MAY 29-31, 1992
NEW YORK CITY

May 30 • *Concert by Country Joe McDonald*

For more information: (718) 788-2009
VVAW 25th Anniversary Committee
P.O. Box 74, Brooklyn, NY 11215

ENDORSEMENTS ($25) WELCOME AND ENCOURAGED—
MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO VVAW 25th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE

BIG APPLE SET FOR BIG WEEKEND

VVAW's 25th anniversary celebration,to be held in New York City from May 29-31, 1992 is shaping up to be a very exciting and memorable weekend. Not since former mayor Ed Koch called upstate New York "sterile" has their been so much excitement generated.

Rooms have been reserved for out-of-towners at a luxury hotel complete with swimming pool, track, weights, etc. We got a great deal on this place and it has New York style Motel 6 prices, with doubles going for $85 plus tax, and quads for $105 plus tax. If anyone wants to book rooms, contact your chapter for more information.

Right now we have sites for our Saturday concert, featuring a set by Country Joe McDonald. We are working on a bigger place to hold the Sunday morning reflection. Interest in this event is growing rapidly. This quote "Memory of the Vietnam war is the single most powerful restraint upon the arbitrary use of American Military Power" is our inspiration for this event.

We are also planning a Saturday morning memorial service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial followed by a march and rally in Battery Park, with a view of the Statue of Liberty, site of one of VVAW's memorable takeovers. There will be a luncheon on Saturday afternoon following the rally and we hope to have a good time eating and chatting with each other. Of course, for those who will be thirsty after yelling at the New York Stock Exchange, there will be beer and wine provided at the lunch.

For those of you coming to New York on Friday, we will have some kind of reception for you, hopefully with some of the honorary board members present. And what a diversified list of honorees! It includes Rep. Ronald Dellums, Arlo Guthrie, Ron Kovic, Bob Muller, Holly Near, Bella Abzug and Maude De Victor.

Reaction from around the country has been outstanding. Today a member donated $150, for both a journal advertisement, (you are welcome to place one) and a contribution. Gail Graham who used to be in the Buffalo chapter made copies of our mailing he received and sent it to many members that he still has contact with. He thinks he'll be able to fill several quads. Good work, Buffalo.

We've received calls from Texas, California and we even have Pete Mahoney flying in from Moscow for the event.

Please plan to come to New York in May, and celebrate with us 25 years of fighting for veterans, peace and justice.

Request from Country Joe

Country Joe McDonald is requesting that members send copies of memorabilia such as pictures of VVAW and him, leaflets, etc. to the Brooklyn address of VVAW. Please don't send originals.

VIETNAM VETERANS AGAINST THE WAR

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